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This essay will investigate three digital marketing platforms (DMPs) that offer streaming services: Spotify, Tidal and SoundCloud. Each will be critically evaluated through the process of a competitor analysis which will focus on their strengths and weaknesses. It will start by giving a brief overview of each of the companies and will then go on to, first examine their interactions with consumers (B2C) and then evaluate their engagement with businesses (B2B).

Spotify

Spotify was launched in 2008. It is a multinational company available on multiple platforms and has over 286million users (Iqbal, 2020). It is the number one streaming platform by number of subscribers (Iqbal, 2020; Watson, 2020) which currently stands at 138million (Watson, 2020). It offers music, podcasts and videos organising music by criteria such as genres, moods, playlists, artists, new releases, charts, concerts and has 50million+ tracks, 4billion+ playlists and 1.5million+ podcasts available (Iqbal, 2020; Spotify, n.d.). The company reported total revenue of €1.67bn in the second quarter of 2019 and is valued at nearly \$50billion (Ingham, 2020).

Tidal

Tidal, launched in 2014 is another multinational company, available on multiple platforms. Accurate, up-to-date figures for Tidal are quite difficult to obtain but according to Woodworth (2020) and Singleton (2018) they have between 1 and 5 million subscribers. It has a catalog of 60million+ tracks (Tidal, n.d.). It offers live concerts, music videos (some of which are exclusive), various podcasts and provides 500+ curated playlists (Clark, 2019). The company reported total revenue as nearly \$148million in 2018 (Ingham, 2020).

SoundCloud

SoundCloud launched in 2007 and is also a multinational company, the biggest open audio platforms (SoundCloud, n.d.). It has 272million+ users monthly (McIntyre, 2018) of which 76million+ are registered users (Smith, 2020). It has 125million+ tracks and also offers a small number of podcasts. Videos and curated playlists (SoundCloud Newsroom, 2019). The company reported a revenue of almost \$200million in 2019 (Thomas, 2020).

SWOTs were conducted for each of these companies and comparison charts created (see Appendix) and the results were used to complete this competitor analysis.

Business-to-Consumer

Various aspects of these companies' interactions with consumers (B2C) are evaluated in the following analysis.

Payment Plans

Offers of different subscriptions and payment plans will be beneficial to the user. Budget is important but the features of the product offered are also a significant factor; Pettinger, 2017 explains “consumers wish to maximise their utility through the optimal combination of goods – given their limited budget”. There is also the question of the ethical consumer who may prefer to pay a higher subscription to ensure the financial well-being of artists whose music they enjoy.

The different payment tiers offered address different customer needs. Clear layouts and a good interface make it easy for the consumer to choose the tier that is right for them and move on to registration and payment.

The paid subscription models extended by Spotify, Tidal and SoundCloud offer both ad-free listening and options to listen offline. Spotify currently offers four subscription packages: Free Version, Spotify Premium, Spotify Family and Spotify Student. Tidal offers similar plans but it does not offer a freemium version and the different tiers offer different audio quality (lossy/lossless). The higher subscription costs of Tidal could be considered a threat as it may deter users. SoundCloud also has a freemium option and in addition offers two other options: Go and Go+. It does not offer a family option and like Tidal only the top tier offers higher quality audio which is not lossless but is higher quality than Spotify.

The freemium options allow people to access the platforms without paying but use a downgraded version. It does mean they are interrupted with adverts and there will be other limitations for example Spotify freemium option includes limitations on skipping tracks and only allows shuffle play. Offering a free version encourages users and hopes to convert them into subscribers (Anderson, 2009; Liu, Au, & Choi, 2014).

The lack of a freemium version may be a negative for Tidal as this could hinder their future progress as consumers cannot access the platform easily and might be put off trying it. However, the platforms that offer freemium options claim that 70% of their revenues are paid back to record companies and recording artists to license music and Alsina (2020) states that “90% of Spotify’s 2019 revenue came from its premium subscribers—which is significantly more profitable than its ad-supported listener-base”. This could cause a problem if the majority of users do not upgrade to premium. Tidal, therefore, offering a ‘try-it’ instead of a freemium option still offers the user choice but is perhaps more sustainable.

Access to Artists

A user is more likely to use and remain on the site if they can connect and interact with the artists they follow as it makes it a more personal experience.

Spotify, Tidal and SoundCloud all offer the user the opportunity to connect with the artists. When the user follows an artist they will be shown any new releases, playlists, and tours of that artist. Tidal is particularly good at making consumer to artist connections; it does this via boosted personalised user offerings such as added integrations with Instagram Stories and Facebook Stories and features such as Tidal X (live streamed festivals, concerts and exclusive live events), 'My Video Mix' (personalised, curated videos for the user) and 'Credits' (O'Brien, 2018).

Spotify and Tidal do not have the ability to comment on songs or posts by artists and this is an opportunity missed as users become more engaged if they feel connected to the artist and are more likely to use the site.

Different Markets

Consumers of music streaming platforms may be attracted to different sites depending on what services they offer.

The ability to share music allows people to connect and relate to each other Ray (2017) and this may be attractive to some users and act as a lure or retainer to the site.

Spotify, Tidal and SoundCloud all have a feature to enable sharing of playlists and Spotify has recently been trialling a new feature ('Group Sessions') to let users share music in real-time, including playback controls, this may be particularly useful to the user during the Covid-19 crisis as it allows families and friends to connect through music (Potuck, 2020).

Another feature that may impact on the user and their experience with the streaming site is lossy and lossless music quality. Some users will fully appreciate lossless music quality whereas others are happy to listen to music in lossy quality as Dittmar (2012, p170) indicates lossy "take[s] advantage of human's ability to fill in the gaps" but an audiophile listening on good quality equipment will hear a clear difference between these qualities.

Tidal offers lossless audio and SoundCloud high quality audio at a cost whereas Spotify offers lower audio so it is not the best choice for audiophiles. (Rutnik, 2020). If the consumer is an audiophile then the opportunity of listening to lossless audio is undoubtedly important but as Beaumont-Thomas (2018) states "[Spotify's] 320kbps "high quality" setting will satisfy all but the most sensitive listener". For these "sensitive listeners" Spotify could therefore take the opportunity to offer a higher tier of payment with lossless quality.

Features on music streaming sites that allow users to discover new artists may be beneficial to some users who want to widen their range of music; this in turn is beneficial to the artist who hopes to get their music heard by the user.

All of them have various music discovery features and enable many ways of browsing such as by genre, mood and activity. Tidal has a dedicated area called 'Tidal Rising' which showcases new musicians and Spotify has 'Discover' daily/weekly. Both Spotify and Tidal offer playlists to encourage users to find new music but these will be chosen based on algorithms of the consumers listening habits. This may limit the opportunities for new genres of music to be experienced by the user and as Beaumont-Thomas (2018) commented "[Spotify's] model doesn't code for surprise, but perpetuates "lean-back" passivity. There is no context on the platform, merely entreaties to enjoy more of the same: "You like bread? Try toast!" (Beaumont-Thomas, 2018). 'SoundCloud Weekly' and 'The Upload' are the discovery playlists SoundCloud offers, they differ from Spotify and Tidal as they are not based on algorithms but are truly emerging artists.

User Interface

The way a digital online company interacts with its users is crucial as Stone et al (Elsevier, 2005, p6) indicate users prefer systems that are "easy to use, easy to understand and enable them to obtain their goals with minimal frustration" Berezhnoi (n.d.) goes further and suggest that "a good user interface can turn potential visitors to buyers".

Spotify can be used in many places and platforms such as the car, on TV and airlines and has a straightforward, seamless user interface that is good for the new and ongoing user. Its options for sign-up and ease of generating and getting curated playlists start the personalisation process quickly which means Spotify are more likely to retain their new user.

The ongoing user continues to have a good experience with Spotify with an easy to negotiate main menu with four tabs at the bottom (on the mobile app) which allow for both easy searching and easy upgrading to premium services and access to the users library.

It focuses on mainstream pop music which is maybe because it recognises that over 50% of its listeners in the US (one of its largest markets) are younger than 35 (Watson, 2020; Johnson, 2019) with 29% being millennials (Singh, 2020).

Tidal is also available on many platforms and its user interface is easy to use, also having four options on the mobile app; perhaps because it is only a paid for site it does not include an easy upgrade option. It does have an 'Explore' option but the focus of Tidal appears to be towards hip hop/rap and mainstream music (Cleyn, 2020; O'Brien, 2018) so when exploring/searching rising stars and new releases are shown, again this means it is not so tailored to the individual consumer but it does broaden the reach of artists to new consumers.

SoundCloud available on TV via Airplay and in the car has multi-platform options. It has five tabs at the bottom (mobile app) including an easy upgrade button 'Go+'. Although it does not give music recommendations it does have curated playlists and shows a wide range of music including from new artists

They are all quite intuitive when searching even if you misspell an artist's name and all allow the user to like and save tracks to a playlist and collection.

Business-to-Business

The business-to-business (B2B) engagement has been analysed and evaluated for Spotify, Tidal and SoundCloud.

Business Model

These DMPs are all about music and the labels and artists who create and upload it, without them they would not have a product to sell and would not continue to grow. It is therefore crucial that they value the artists but they also need to balance their costs to artists and labels with their income from users and advertisers.

Streaming payments to artists are quite variable as they depend on whether they are signed to a label or are an independent artist and performer (Mejia, 2019). Spotify have been frequently criticised for their low payments to artists (Kormoczi, 2019; Frankel & Gervais, 2014; Guttenberg, 2012) which is not good for their brand image but the low payments need to be weighed against the large consumer base they hold, which means more plays and higher payments to some artists. It is noticeable that even well-known artists such as Jay-Z (a co-owner of Tidal) and Taylor Swift have recently returned their discography to Spotify.

Tidal differentiates itself with a commitment to pay fair rates to artists (Klein, 2020) and positioned themselves in the market as being a streaming platform that values artists while "[making] it look really good and make everyone that consumes it think, 'Man, I got something really great.'" (Jay-Z cited in Gervino, 2015). This is one of the USPs of Tidal, its payments to the artists, according to D++to (2020) and Sanchez (2018) are four-times more than Spotify. Jay-Z in an interview with Billboard (cited in Gervino, 2015) indicated that at the very least it would try and promote fair trade by improving the free vs paid system.

Longevity of Business

Building a business that endures is crucial as if it seems weak and under threat other businesses and users will not want to risk doing business. The ability of any company to compete and be resilient in the face of change builds trust and enables it to thrive and as Saari (2018) points out "businesses that are positioned for longevity are almost always more valuable than those that are not".

Monetisation is one quality needed to achieve longevity as it makes the business profitable and sustainable. Another is flexibility, being able to react quickly to changing events is a key component of a successful business (LaMarco, 2018; Holbeche, 2017). Growing the client base of the business is another aspect of making the business sustainable and this involves engaging with artists including emerging artists.

Spotify, Tidal and SoundCloud all monetise their brands using subscriptions. The freemium option delivered by Spotify and SoundCloud is an ad-supported service and is used as a revenue model to bring in advertising. Cuofano (n.d.) indicates that in 2017 “over 10% of Spotify revenues [came] from ad-supported services, while the remaining, about 90% [came] from membership services”. This in turn allows Spotify to scale up and attract a bigger user base and presents opportunities to gain paid membership as Cuofano (n.d.) indicates, for Spotify “the ad-supported serves as a funnel, which drives more than 60% of Spotify total gross added Premium Subscribers”.

However, advertising through Spotify or SoundCloud may not be attractive to all businesses as Rain (2019) notes, adverts are played within playlists which limits the geo-targeting for advertisers and therefore may not be attractive to all advertisers other than as a branding exercise. As an alternative, SoundCloud’s “promoted tracks” appear on playlists even for ‘ad-free’ Go+ users; this is an opportunity that Spotify and Tidal could utilise as a way to increase revenue.

Record labels also have to be considered when examining the freemium model as they receive a higher fee from Spotify if the track is played by a subscriber than they do if it is played by an ad-sponsored user. This does not mean that Spotify prefers users of the freemium service, as in reality paying users provide more revenue and stability and this can act as a bargaining chip for Spotify (Voigt, Buliga et al, 2016, p151). This bargaining of course goes both ways,, as Universal negotiated a new deal in 2017 that saw new releases being reserved for premium subscribers only, for two-weeks (Slattery, 2018).

Spotify is in a very strong financial position and can be flexible and react quickly to changes in the market such as Covid-19 where it launched MusiCares’ Covid-19, a music relief project, matching donations made and enabling artists to fundraise via their Spotify profile (MusicAlly, 2020; PRS Foundation, Spotify for Artists, 2020).

Tidal’s financial position is also strong and like Spotify it has been able to respond to the Covid-19 crisis by streaming filmed concerts free of charge (Krol, 2020) and reduced subscriptions for a limited period (Johnson, 2020)

SoundCloud have struggled in the past financially closing offices and letting nearly half its workforce go (Lunden, 2017; Butler, 2017). They have now monetised their services with subscriptions which large record labels prefer and have also responded to the Covid-19 crisis by giving artists a new button to use to ask their fans for financial support and SoundCloud.

All musicians want to have access to as big a market as possible and companies who are multinational and have strong branding are going to be what they aim for. This includes independent artists, many of whom are using a DIY approach to their careers (Boil and Miller, 2002) and as such are not signed to a label and therefore not as well represented on many streaming platforms as the bigger artists are. This is a lucrative market for the DMPs as more artists on their sites increases their client base.

Spotify accepts music submissions from independent artists as long as they are checked for audio quality and copyright infringement via a recognised third party distributor. Tidal also allows independent artists to upload tracks but they can only be submitted via a few select distributors and again are checked for audio quality and copyright infringements. This means that Spotify and Tidal are more likely to have high quality tracks as these are regulated via the distributor.

In the past Spotify introduced RISE to support emerging artists but it has been criticised for “[failing] to support a single new artist through its flagship emerging talent program” (Ingham, 2019) and Spotify has not had a strong B2B in engaging and retaining emerging artists other than offering analytical tools. It has now launched ‘Radar’ where emerging artists will be offered a mixture of editorial and marketing support along with inclusion on a dedicated playlist called ‘On Our Radar’ (Music:)Ally, 2020). This initiative will add strength to their B2B brand.

In contrast to this, one of the core values that has added strength to Tidal’s brand from its inception is their B2B engagement with artists, particularly emerging artists. They have introduced two initiatives intended “to gather emerging artists and provide them with support and tools to advance their music careers” (Stassen, 2019) : Tidal Unplugged, a million dollar artist grant program (Variety Staff, 2019) and ‘Tidal Rising’ which gives artists a “worldwide platform” (Cambridge Audio, n.d.) and provides artists with services such as press photos, PR, tour support.

These B2B services make Tidal stand out in the marketplace as Cambridge Audio (n.d.) state “Tidal truly goes [above]-and-beyond when it comes to nurturing careers of new musicians” (ibid) and give Tidal a strong USP .

SoundCloud has a strong engagement with artists both B2B and B2C because the artists are often both the business and the consumer. It is also dedicated to helping emerging artists but in a very different way. They support independent artists by making uploading to their site simple, free and with no need for a digital distributor.

This creates a strong B2B gateway for SoundCloud as musicians start here and then continue on to other streaming platforms. This benefits both SoundCloud and their competitors, making this a very sustainable model as there is always going to be a need for new artists and SoundCloud gets many of them first.

Partnerships

Partnerships help with monetisation, flexibility and increasing the market share of the company and are therefore highly advantageous to these companies.

Spotify has numerous partnerships with companies around the world who have integrated with them and been mutually beneficial such as Sprint/T-Mobile, Motorola, Samsung, Starbucks, Merchbar, Google Maps and Waze (Business Wire, 2019; For the Record, 2018; Samuely, 2017; Lunden, 2017; Music Business Worldwide, 2016; Horn, 2014). An example of this is Google Maps and Waze who have both integrated Spotify into their platform to allow customers to listen to music whilst driving/walking while using their app.

Spotify's partnership with Facebook is perhaps one of its most prominent (Voigt, Buliga et al, 2016) and raised "over half a billion US \$ between 2008 and 2015" for Spotify. It was integrated within Facebook's platform, allowing users to listen to music within Facebook and share songs and playlist with friends (ibid, p149-150).

Spotify's B2B service also includes 'Spotify for Brands' (Spotify for Brands, n.d.).which provides large consumer brands such as Reebok, BMW, Vodafone, Nike, L'Oreal the opportunity to increase brand awareness by designing music playlists and ads to target specific audiences on Spotify.

Tidal also has partnerships with numerous well-known companies such as Amazon, Samsung, Dolby, Arsenal Football Club and Waze. As the first artist owned streaming service its high profile owners may also attract businesses to advertise and/or partner. This could also be a threat to Tidal's business should these owners leave and their subscribers go with them.

SoundCloud has various advertising partnerships with companies such as Targetspot, Southern Cross Austereo, Pandora and Twitch which benefit businesses and users. For example, the partnership with Pandora benefits advertisers as "the two companies now have a merged advertising audience of 100 million users across both platforms" (Turner, 2018). The partnership with Twitch however benefits the artist (and business) as SoundCloud fast-tracks artists onto the Twitch Affiliate platform, allowing the artist to make money from live streams.

Multinational

Being in the global arena and having strong branding will increase these companies' consumer base; it will benefit the artists (particularly the known ones), labels and the advertisers and attract business to the company.

Spotify and SoundCloud have strong branding which is easily recognisable, Tidal is less recognisable on the iconography side of branding but has very high profile owners which certainly makes it a recognisable brand.

Spotify is available in 96 countries and has recently launched in both India, where it is “currently, the largest audio streaming platform” (Bhalla, 2020) and Russia where “more than 87% of recorded music consumers in Russia now access music through streaming” (Ingham, 2020).

Tidal is in 56 countries, lagging a little behind Spotify possibly because their high profile ownership is less well known in some countries and this may hold them back. SoundCloud is in 190 countries. This makes all these DMPs truly multinational companies and the more global they become the more they are able to repeat their successful model and increase their share of the market.

Copyright Protection

Artists and labels value the work they put into track(s) and if they feel the DMPs adhere to copyright protection law then they will trust them with their work. This assurance means that the companies retain artists and are trusted by new and emerging artists.

All of these DMPs have strong copyright protection and make it clear that uploading copyrighted content is illegal. Spotify and Tidal make it almost impossible to do so and insist artists use a third party distributor to check for any copyright infringement. It is easy and free to upload tracks onto SoundCloud but SoundCloud still checks uploaded content and will block any tracks it believes infringe on copyright.

Spotify and Tidal have still had copyright infringement issues which they have settled (Perez, 2018) including an alleged copyright issue lawsuit claiming Tidal “[failed] to register – and pay mechanical royalties to an artist in the US” (Ingham, 2016) which Tidal is contesting. The nature of these large companies means that there continues to be disputes and challenges over copyright (Stassen, 2020; Reilly, 2019).

SoundCloud has also had numerous problems with copyright infringement. These problems could affect them as businesses and artists may not want to use them if they do not feel their music will be protected. SoundCloud have taken measures to improve this but this has also led to problems as tracks have been taken down unjustifiably leading to artists abandoning SoundCloud (Sanchez, 2018).

Conclusion

The competitor analysis has identified similarities and differences between the three DMPs. All of these companies are trying to maximise their user base and all offer a selection of payment plans and features to capture as wide a range of consumers as possible. As can be seen by the lossy and lossless argument there is not a one size fits all and different subscription options allow the DMPs to attract different consumer types.

There is debate on whether the 'freemium' model is sustainable for these businesses as they all need paying customers to succeed. However the 'freemium' option is still used to draw users in and convert them to paying customers.

The user interface is important both to retain the consumer and to expand their streaming use. All the DMPs offer easy accessibility to the user and the more ways that are available the more use the consumers will make of the platforms. Another aspect of this accessibility is the business and the artist broaden their reach by making it possible to share music between users and all the businesses analysed provide this ability.

The independent market is an area of business that all the DMPs want to exploit and they all have some features to encourage the independent artist to use their services. SoundCloud has more features available that benefit the independent artist.

They all have strong branding and business models that have successfully been able to adapt or specialise in the various countries they have expanded into.

Having numerous partnerships shows there are companies that want to invest in the DMPs and see them as viable organisations which in turn adds strength to the businesses, allowing them to grow and expand.

Payments to artists appears to be an ongoing dispute for DMPs. Tidal's positioning in the marketplace as a company that values and pays the artist accordingly may mean there will be a change in this area if this business continues to grow and succeed.

Finally, copyright protection is an important area for any music streaming platform to focus on and although they all continue to address this concern they still face challenges. They therefore need to remain vigilant regarding this issue or it could damage their brand.

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Appendix

Contents

B2C

- Spotify SWOT
- Tidal SWOT
- SoundCloud SWOT

B2B

- Spotify SWOT
- Tidal SWOT
- SoundCloud SWOT

B2C Comparison

B2B Comparison

Business to Consumer

SWOTs

Spotify - B2C

Strengths

- Multinational listeners
- Moods/playlist
- good/fair monthly payment to customer
- Easily shareable
- Can download offline
- More social features (seeing what friends are listening too)
- S: able to play local files on phone and connect
- S: if name is misspelt, it will correct & find
- S: Spotify is currently available in 79 countries

Weakness

- Only suggests new music based on your listening (don't get to widen range)
- Aimed/caters for younger audience/generation (50% under 35) .

Opportunities

- Expand even more into new markets across the world.
- Incorporate more video options (like Tidal)
- Heavily relies on positive relationships with artists (Taylor Swift).
- Offer lossless audio subscription.
- Ability to message artists.

Threats

- Spending monthly cost for music and not owning any of it, like you would a CD. all lost if cancelled.

Tidal - B2C

Strengths

- Much of Tidal's *exclusive* content is now delivered in the form of video.
- Lossless CD quality audio for consumers (USP).
- High definition music videos for consumers.
- Curated playlists from artists who co-own the company.
- Private listening experience (fans to artist).

Weakness

- Higher subscriptions costs.
- Heavy focus on hip hop rap, pushes hard .
- Pushes getting revenue from listeners.

Opportunities

- Could offer a free service as well as premium.
- Wider access to music labels to offer more music.
- Could add more social features.
- Ability to message artists.

Threats

- No free option for customers.
- Other streaming platforms offer more genres to customers.
- Cannot play local phone files through Tidal
- Values artists revenue over listeners ease and tailored to them.

SoundCloud - B2C

Strengths

- Engagement/loyalty.
- Allows users to upload, record, promote and share their originally-created sounds all for free. (empowers **users** to be **creators** and allows them to upload and share their own content).
- Easily shareable/playable links.
- Great for emerging/small independent artists to get their music heard.
- Ability to download music.
- Messaging/comments on songs .

Weakness

- Users cannot turn off the continuous.. play feature on SoundCloud.
- Less easy to use than other platforms. Less aesthetic.
- Playlists/moods/discovery options aren't as advanced as Tidal/Spotify.

Opportunities

- Create more sections/desirability for customers who aren't artists.
- Video content.

Threats

- Bigger competitors cause customers to choose or jump platforms .

Business to Business

SWOTs

Spotify - B2B

Strengths

- Multinational business (96 countries) (most of Europe and the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Africa and Asia, Russia, India).
- 299m users, including 138m subscribers, across 92 markets.
- Strong brand.
- Spotify for artists, tips, analytics etc .
- Well established - money behind to react quickly to changes (Covid-19...)
- Partnerships.
- Meets copyright requirements
- Sell merchandise throughout an artists page

Weakness

- Low payment to artists.
- Lossy audio to appeal to masses.
- Focuses on mainstream music (less independent music).
- Copyright issues crop up.

Opportunities

- Expand partnerships.
- Relies on mass advertising .
- If they collect royalties, they would pay less to label/distributors as it could go straight to artists.

Threats

- Spotify depends on Apple's App Store/Google play. (pays to them too) could cut Spotify off or ask for more money.
- Siri, Apple's digital assistant, and its ability to mix personal music files with streaming ones.
- Easily imitated.
- Competition with major technology companies
- Legal disputes/challenges.

Tidal B2B

Strengths

- Tidal pays four-times more than Spotify and Amazon Music.
- Tidal also provides artists with press photos, PR, tour support, and other artist services that you never expect a streaming service to provide.
- First artist owned streaming service.
- Tidal rising program.
- Tidal unplugged - helps emerging artists.
- 60 million songs vs Spotify 50 mill
- Exclusives.
- Nurturing emerging artists.
- Numerous partnerships.

Weakness

- High quality take up phone/contract space?
- Can only log into an artists account if you are signed up with Tidal.
- Copyright issues.
- Tidal does business in 56 countries.

Opportunities

- Get a partnership with CD baby/Distrokid like Spotify has.
- Expand platforms it's available (Samsung, Windows, Apple, Huawei)
- Develop a must have policy to social media sites etc
- Nurture emerging artists, Spotify could too

Threats

- Higher subscription costs than other streaming platforms like Spotify may deter customers
- Others offer ad-free paid
- If high profile owners leave they may take customers.

SoundCloud - B2B

Strengths

- Strong established brand.
- Artists tend to be the consumers. Artists can find other like minded artists (collabs, or record labels can scout out talent).
- Good platform for DJ's etc.
- Numerous partnerships.

Weakness

- Offers unlimited removal powers to certain copyright holders, allowing those copyright holders to remove paid subscribers' content without avenue to contest and dispute wrongful deletions.
- Have to use a third party to download music to your phone.
- Copyright issues

Opportunities

- Expand partnerships e.g. Announcing its partnership with HEOS by Denon. This alliance could possibly allow the users to easily create, share and stream their SoundCloud audios through HEOS range of multi room audio speakers.
- Adding ads to produce more revenue .
- Can use there wide audience as marketing .
- Could set up discovery program to find new independent artists.

Threats

- SoundCloud has an uncertain future in regards to music copyrights.
- Illegal recording caused Turkey to ban SoundCloud.

Business to Consumer and Business to Business

Comparisons

B2C - Comparison	
All have listeners around the world 96, 56, 190	Costs to listen ➤ Spotify – freemium option, ➤ Tidal – no free version and higher subscription ➤ -SoundCloud – freemium option
Playlists – differences. Customers creating their own	All shareable - Social features such as what friends are listening to
Spotify and Tidal are available offline	SoundCloud allows upload, record, promote and share their originally-created sounds all for free. (empowers users to be creators and allows them to upload and share their own content).
Emerging artists – Are they easy to find by users?	Access to artists by fans/users - Spotify - algorithms.
Download music.	Only SoundCloud offers Messaging/Comments on tracks.
Exclusive Content offered – Only Tidal. Tidal - Private listening experience (fans to artist).	➤ Tidal - Lossless quality. ➤ SoundCloud higher. ➤ Spotify none.
➤ Curated playlists – Spotify has but relies on algorithms. ➤ Tidal has but may be hip hop/rap bias. ➤ SoundCloud has playlists .	Spotify – new music based on listening habits so consumers can't easily broaden the range of music they listen to. Tidal strong connections to hip hop/rap music. SoundCloud listening for those that aren't artists?
All have apps	Continuous play feature cannot be turned off on SoundCloud.
Audiences they are aimed at.	Users do not own the music as they would with a CD, cassette, vinyl or mp3.
Ease of use/aesthetic - Spotify and Tidal easy. SoundCloud is less aesthetic and the playlists, moods and discovery options are not as advanced as Tidal and Spotify.	Merchandising .
Playing local files .	

B2B - Comparison	
Spotify, Tidal and SoundCloud are Multinational businesses, they are in 96, 56 and 190?? countries Artists/Tracks available: Spotify 60m, Tidal ? SoundCloud 125m (many are independent upload)	Merchandise - Spotify uses sole partners through site. Tidal ? through pages SoundCloud link to third party suggestions
Branding - Spotify & SoundCloud have strong recognisable branding. Tidal not so strong - more US Centric	Spotify & SoundCloud well established. Spotify – Successful with high revenue. Tidal and SoundCloud have struggled but now seem stable
All provide support for artists: Spotify for artists, tips, analytics etc (Do any of the others do this or similar?) Tidal – unplugged + press photos, PR, tour support, and other artist services SoundCloud –with Pro+	Copyright - all seem to have had issues.
Tidal high quality audio (USP) vs Spotify loss of quality audio to appeal to masses and SoundCloud can be poor as it depends what people upload.	Payment of artists. Tidal – higher . Spotify – low payment. SoundCloud doesn't pay artists.
Tidal strong USP high quality and extra features to keep artists (unplugged + rising) vs Spotify USP B2C orientated but no loyalty from artists. Owned by Jay-Z - artist orientated. Tidal still has significant advantages because of their ownership and their artist friendly mission.	Tidal only allows access to artist profile with paid account vs Spotify & SoundCloud both offer free version and monthly membership Adverts?
SoundCloud stronger direct support for emerging artists, authentic music.	Tidal use curators to pick artists vs Spotify: also curators but rely heavily on algorithms/data.
Spotify & Tidal tracks can <i>only</i> be uploaded through distributors - Spotify, Tidal good quality music. SoundCloud direct. Spotify and Tidal vet audio and artwork.	All act quickly to situations (like Covid).
Monetisation – Ways of Partnerships	